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Schorr 'Fired' By CNN

Dispute Over Clause In Contract Cited

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Veteran broadcast journalist Daniel Schorr, 68, lost his job as senior correspondent for the Cable News Network yesterday after CNN executives refused to renew a clause in his contract giving him journalistic independence.

"I was fired," Schorr said from his home in Northwest Washington. "They decided they would rather fire me than honor the promise Ted Turner made personally to me in 1979."

Turner, president and chairman of Turner Broadcasting System, Inc., which owns CNN, hired Schorr a year before CNN signed on the air in 1980 as the first all-news, 24-hour cable network. The promise was that Schorr would have editorial freedom and independence.

CNN President Bert Reinhardt told UPI in Atlanta that the network was "unable to come to terms on a new contract" with Schorr.

Schorr said he was "shocked" when notified yesterday that his relationship with CNN was over.

In a statement, he said that a clause in his contract, to which Turner had agreed, stated that no demands would be made upon

Schorr "that would compromise his professional ethics and responsibilities." Although his contract runs until the end of May, it came up for review last October when Schorr proposed he begin a new Sunday magazine news show on the network. At that time, Schorr said, Reinhardt began to express doubts that the contract could be renewed with the independence clause in it.

Neither Turner nor any other CNN spokesmen could be reached for comment yesterday. Schorr said he had not been able to reach Turner himself to discuss the matter. "I have not been able for the past year even to get through to Ted Turner," Schorr said. "Even today, I called up to say goodbye and was told he was sailing."

Turner has been in the news recently for allegedly planning a hostile takeover of CBS Inc. and has been subpoenaed by CBS in connection with its lawsuit against the conservative Fairness in Media group that has announced intentions to gain control of the company. CBS issued a statement on March 1 that it had "had no discussions with Ted Turner regarding any plan he might have to acquire CBS."

Schorr himself worked for CBS News for 23 years before joining Turner in 1979. He resigned from CBS in 1979 after a controversy involving his reporting of a classified report by the House Intelligence Committee about improper conduct at the FBI and CIA. A report never aired was eventually published in The Village Voice.

"I have a great feeling of *déjà vu*," Schorr said yesterday when asked if he had quit or been fired. "In 1976, I could not make up in my own mind whether I resigned or was fired either." He officially did resign in 1976, but was fired yesterday, he said.

EXCERPTED